

By: Representatives Cockerham, Bondurant,
Whittington, Stringer, Warren, Baker (74th),
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To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 1465

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL PHYSICIANS SCHOLARS
2 PROGRAM FOR THE PURPOSE OF RECRUITING AND TRAINING QUALIFIED
3 PERSONS TO PRACTICE MEDICINE IN RURAL AREAS OF THE STATE; TO
4 CREATE THE MISSISSIPPI ACCESS TO RURAL PHYSICIANS SCHOLARS
5 COMMISSION TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH A BOARD FOR THE
6 MISSISSIPPI ACCESS TO RURAL PHYSICIANS SCHOLARS COMMISSION AND TO
7 PRESCRIBE ITS POWERS AND DUTIES; TO PROVIDE THAT THE COMMISSION
8 SHALL BE HOUSED IN THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
9 MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER; TO PRESCRIBE THE ELIGIBILITY
10 REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS SEEKING ENTRY INTO THE
11 PROGRAM; TO PROVIDE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROCESS IN
12 CONJUNCTION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
13 WHICH WOULD FACILITATE EARLY ADMISSION OF QUALIFIED PROGRAM
14 PARTICIPANTS TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL OF MEDICINE;
15 TO AUTHORIZE THE COMMISSION TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO
16 PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS IN UNDERGRADUATE AND MEDICAL SCHOOL AND
17 RESIDENCY; TO REQUIRE MEDICAL SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS TO ENTER AND
18 COMPLETE FAMILY MEDICINE OR OTHER GENERALIST RESIDENCY PROGRAMS;
19 TO REQUIRE PARTICIPANTS TO PRACTICE MEDICINE AS FAMILY PHYSICIANS
20 OR OTHER GENERALIST PHYSICIANS IN A RURAL OR HEALTH PROFESSIONAL
21 SHORTAGE AREA OR MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED AREA OF THE STATE FOR THE
22 NUMBER OF YEARS, NOT TO EXCEED FIVE, WHICH CORRESPONDS TO THE
23 NUMBER OF YEARS THAT THE PARTICIPANT RECEIVED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE
24 THROUGH THE PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE PARTICIPANTS WHO FAIL TO COMPLETE
25 THEIR FAMILY MEDICINE OR GENERALIST RESIDENCY AND PRACTICE
26 OBLIGATIONS TO REPAY, ON A PRO RATA BASIS, ANY FINANCIAL
27 ASSISTANCE RECEIVED THROUGH THE PROGRAM PLUS PENALTIES; TO REQUIRE
28 THE COMMISSION TO ENDEAVOR TO ESTABLISH AN INITIAL PRACTICE ENTRY
29 SUPPORT SYSTEM; TO PROVIDE THAT THE COMMISSION AND ITS BOARD HAVE
30 NO AUTHORITY OVER ANY PROGRAMS OTHER THAN THE MISSISSIPPI RURAL
31 PHYSICIANS SCHOLARS PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

32 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

33 **SECTION 1.** There is established the Mississippi Rural Health
34 Scholars Program for the purpose of identifying and recruiting
35 qualified university and college students from rural areas of the
36 state for medical or osteopathic school matriculation. The
37 program shall consist of three (3) distinct phases through which
38 participants will progress, including:

- 39 (a) Undergraduate premedical education;
40 (b) Medical or osteopathic school and residency; and

41 (c) Post residency entry into medical practice in a
42 rural or underserved area of the State of Mississippi.

43 **SECTION 2.** (1) The Rural Physicians Scholars Program shall
44 be administered by a commission to be known as the "Mississippi
45 Access to Rural Physicians Scholars Commission." The commission
46 shall be directed by a board composed of the following members:

47 (a) Two (2) generalist physicians appointed by and from
48 the membership of the Mississippi State Medical Association, the
49 term of which shall be three (3) years and may be reappointed for
50 one (1) additional term;

51 (b) One (1) generalist physician appointed by and from
52 the membership of each of the following organizations, the term of
53 which shall be three (3) years and may be reappointed for one (1)
54 additional term:

55 (i) Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians;

56 (ii) Mississippi Chapter, American College of
57 Physicians;

58 (iii) Mississippi Chapter, American Academy of
59 Pediatrics;

60 (iv) Mississippi Chapter, American College of
61 OB-GYN;

62 (v) Mississippi Medical and Surgical Association;

63 (vi) Mississippi Osteopathic Association;

64 (c) Two (2) designees of the Dean of the University of
65 Mississippi School of Medicine whose terms are at the discretion
66 of the dean, at least one (1) of whom is a member of the
67 University of Mississippi School of Medicine Admissions Committee;

68 (d) Two (2) medical students, one (1) of whom shall be
69 selected yearly through a process developed by the dean of the
70 School of Medicine in consultation with the chairs of the
71 departments of family medicine, internal medicine, OB-GYN, and
72 pediatrics, and one (1) of whom shall be nominated for a one (1)
73 year term by the Mississippi Chapter of the Student National

74 Medical Association and approved by the dean of the University of
75 Mississippi School of Medicine.

76 (e) A member of the Board of Trustees of State
77 Institutions of Higher Learning; and

78 (f) The Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at
79 the University of Mississippi School of Medicine.

80 (2) The premedical advisors from the accredited four-year
81 colleges and universities in the state and the directors or
82 designees of the primary care generalist training programs in the
83 State of Mississippi shall comprise an advisory committee to the
84 board to assist the board in its administration of the Rural
85 Physicians Scholars Program.

86 (3) Vacancies on the board must be filled in a manner
87 consistent with the original appointments.

88 (4) All appointments to the board must be made no later than
89 September 1, 2007. After the members are appointed, the board
90 shall meet on a date mutually agreed upon by a majority of the
91 members for the purposes of organizing the board and establishing
92 rules for transacting its business. A majority of the members of
93 the board shall constitute a quorum at all board meetings. An
94 affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting
95 shall be required in the adoption of rules, reports and in any
96 other actions taken by the board. At the organizational meeting,
97 the board shall elect a chair and vice chair from the members
98 appointed according to paragraphs (a) through (d) of subsection
99 (1). The chair shall serve for a term of two (2) years, upon the
100 expiration of which the vice chair shall assume the office of
101 chair.

102 (5) After the organizational meeting, the board shall hold
103 no less than two (2) meetings annually.

104 (6) The committee may form an executive committee for the
105 purpose of transacting business that must be conducted before the
106 next regularly scheduled meeting of the board. All actions taken

107 by the executive committee must be ratified by the board at its
108 next regularly scheduled meeting.

109 (7) Members of the board shall serve without compensation
110 but may be reimbursed, subject to the availability of funding, for
111 mileage and actual and necessary expenses incurred in attending
112 meetings of the board.

113 (8) The commission shall be at the University of Mississippi
114 Medical Center. Funding any required staff support and operation
115 must be from monies appropriated for the Rural Physicians Scholars
116 Program and not for the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

117 **SECTION 3.** The board of the Mississippi Access to Rural
118 Physicians Scholars Commission shall have the following powers and
119 duties:

120 (a) Developing the administrative policy for the
121 commission and the Rural Physicians Scholars Program;

122 (b) Developing and implementing strategies and
123 activities for the identification and recruitment of students and
124 for marketing the program and for the implementation of the
125 program. In developing these strategies, the board shall seek the
126 input of various organizations and entities, including the
127 Mississippi State Medical Association, the Mississippi Academy of
128 Family Physicians, the Mississippi Chapters of the American
129 College of Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, and
130 American College of OB-GYN, the Mississippi Medical and Surgical
131 Association and the Mississippi Osteopathic Medicine Association;

132 (c) Establishing a budget to support the activities of
133 the program and periodically reviewing and if appropriate,
134 revising, the scholarship and other stipends offered through the
135 program;

136 (d) Reviewing participants' progress in the program and
137 mentoring students and physicians participating in the program;

138 (e) Developing and participating in programs that
139 provide initial practice support in collaboration with other

140 interested professional organizations. All funding for practice
141 support must be separate from UMMC funding and not under UMMC
142 control.

143 **SECTION 4.** (1) The board shall develop and implement
144 policies and procedures designed to recruit, identify and enroll
145 undergraduate students who demonstrate necessary interest,
146 commitment, aptitude and academic achievement to pursue careers as
147 family physicians or other generalist physicians in rural or
148 medically underserved areas of Mississippi, and to develop and
149 implement the programs designed to foster successful entry of
150 participants into medical school, completion of medical school,
151 enrollment into and completion of family medicine or other
152 generalist residency, and establishment and maintenance of a
153 career in family medicine or other generalist specialty in a rural
154 or underserved area of Mississippi.

155 (2) The Board shall have the authority through use of
156 generally applicable definitions, to designate an area of the
157 state as underserved or rural.

158 (3) Each applicant for admission to the program must submit
159 an application to the commission that conforms to requirements
160 established by the board.

161 (4) In selecting participants for the program, the board may
162 only accept an applicant if his or her academic record and other
163 characteristics, if given consideration by the University of
164 Mississippi School of Medicine Admissions Committee, would be
165 considered credible and competitive.

166 (5) An applicant for the program may be admitted only upon a
167 majority vote of the members of the board.

168 (6) Up to fifteen (15) students will be admitted to the
169 Rural Physicians Scholars Program each year, beginning with the
170 2008-2009 academic year.

171 **SECTION 5.** (1) Participants must adhere to the policies and
172 practices as stipulated by the board to continue in the program.

173 (2) Students in the program may receive tuition or other
174 financial support that may be provided by the commission. If a
175 student in the program is admitted to and completes medical or
176 osteopathic school, any tuition or other educational and living
177 support provided to the student by the commission will be
178 forgiven. However, if the student is not successful in being
179 accepted into medical or osteopathic school within three (3) years
180 of entry into the Rural Physicians Scholars Program, or if the
181 student otherwise breaches his or her agreement with the
182 commission, all financial assistance provided to the student must
183 be repaid according to policies adopted by the board.

184 **SECTION 6.** (1) Students in the program may apply to any
185 medical or osteopathic school that is accredited by the Liaison
186 Committee on Medical Education (LCME) or the American Osteopathic
187 Association (AOA).

188 (2) Students in the program seeking admission to the
189 University of Mississippi School of Medicine shall be eligible for
190 a special admissions process pursuant to criteria established by
191 the School of Medicine Admissions Committee which will include
192 special consideration of the attributes of participation in the
193 program.

194 (3) In carrying out the admissions process developed for the
195 Rural Physicians Scholars Program participants under this section,
196 the goal is for the program to work with the School of Medicine to
197 enhance the capability of participants to successfully enter and
198 complete medical school, train in family medicine or other
199 generalist primary care specialty and enter practice in rural or
200 underserved areas in Mississippi. To the extent feasible, the
201 early admissions process should be completed before November 1 of
202 the year preceding a student's admission to medical school.

203 **SECTION 7.** (1) Subject to the availability of funding,
204 students in the program who successfully matriculate to medical or
205 osteopathic school are eligible for ongoing financial support in

206 accordance with policies and requirements of the commission and in
207 accordance with the applicable laws and regulations. The number
208 of students to be supported at the University of Mississippi
209 School of Medicine and at other schools will be established by
210 policy prescribed by the board.

211 (2) Subject to the availability of funding, students
212 enrolled at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine may
213 receive tuition support, funding to assist with the cost of books
214 and a living stipend, as prescribed by policy of the board and in
215 accordance with applicable regulations. Preferences for ongoing
216 funding must be given to those students admitted to the University
217 of Mississippi School of Medicine.

218 (3) For each year that a student in medical or osteopathic
219 school receives financial assistance, the student is obligated for
220 one (1) year of practice as a primary care physician in a rural or
221 underserved area in Mississippi. Breach of the agreement at any
222 stage of training shall invoke the repayment of all financial
223 assistance provided to the student through the Rural Physicians
224 Scholars Program, including assistance provided during
225 undergraduate school, as well as in medical or osteopathic school,
226 along with other penalties that may be prescribed in policy by the
227 board.

228 **SECTION 8.** Medical and osteopathic students in the program
229 must enter family medicine or other generalist residency programs
230 according to their choice of specialty. Depending upon the
231 availability of funds, students who successfully enter residency
232 programs which have been approved by the board may receive further
233 financial support from the Rural Physicians Scholars Program
234 subject to applicable rules and policies of the commission. All
235 funding for financial support from the commission to participants
236 during their residency must be separate from UMMC funding and not
237 under UMMC control and be disbursed in accordance with applicable
238 regulations.

239 **SECTION 9.** (1) Upon completion of residency, a participant
240 in the Rural Physicians Scholars Program must proceed to enter the
241 practice of medicine in a rural or underserved area in
242 Mississippi, as defined by the board and consistent with generally
243 acceptable designations. If an area experiences significant
244 changes in its medical or general community which are not
245 reflected by HPSA or MUA rural designation, the board may receive
246 testimony and, in its discretion, may qualify the area as an
247 underserved or rural area to allow the program participant to
248 fulfill his or her practice obligation.

249 (2) Upon entering the practice of medicine, a participant in
250 the program must serve in HPSA, MUA, or rural area otherwise
251 approved for practice under subsection (1) of this section for a
252 number of years which corresponds to the number of years, not to
253 exceed five (5), for which the participant received funding
254 through the program. A participant who completes residency
255 outside the State of Mississippi who fails to enter the practice
256 of medicine as required under this section shall be deemed in
257 breach of contract and shall be liable for the immediate repayment
258 of all financial assistance provided to the participant through
259 the Rural Physicians Scholars Program, including assistance
260 provided during undergraduate school, as well as in medical or
261 osteopathic school, along with other penalties that may be
262 prescribed in policy by the board. Any participant who fails to
263 complete the period of practice for which he or she is obligated
264 to provide services in an HPSA or MUA in exchange for financial
265 assistance received through the Rural Physicians Scholars Program
266 shall be liable for the repayment of all financial assistance
267 provided to the participant through the program, along with other
268 penalties that may be prescribed by the board, an amount which
269 shall be reduced on a pro rata basis for actual years of practice
270 by the physician in the area designated by the board.

271 **SECTION 10.** The Mississippi Access to Rural Physicians
272 Scholars Commission, acting through the board, shall make every
273 effort to establish an initial practice entry support system for
274 participants in the program.

275 **SECTION 11.** This act may not be construed as granting the
276 Mississippi Access to Rural Physicians Scholars Commission or its
277 governing board any governing or administrative authority over any
278 program administered by any college, university, medical school or
279 residency program in this state or any other program established
280 by state law, including the Medical Education Scholarship and Loan
281 Repayment Program established under Section 37-143-6.

282 **SECTION 12.** This act shall take effect and be in force from
283 and after July 1, 2007.